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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4116
INFO RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 9370
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 6267
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 4310
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 3135
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 9880
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 3229
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM 0330
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2306
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 6821
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 4685
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1304

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 001373

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/22/2016

TAGS: PREL PTER PHUM PREF MOPS CE

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: UPDATE ON EMBASSY ACTION TO EVACUATE HUMANITARIAN MINE ACTION STAFF FROM JAFFNA

REF: COLOMBO 1361 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: James R. Moore, Charge' d'Affaires, for reasons 1.4(b,d)

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¶1. (SBU) A ship sailing under the flag of the ICRC is scheduled to depart the eastern port of Trincomalee August 24, arriving in Jaffna, in northern Sri Lanka, on August 25, pending the commitment of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to allow the ship to pass safely. Approximately 150 evacuees are expected to reach Trincomalee Harbor on the morning of August 26, where they will be transported by ICRC-flagged buses to Colombo. Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) authorities will select the first 150 to be evacuated on the initial ICRC ship; these will likely include 40-plus expatriate NGO and international agency staff as well as dual nationals from Canada and the UK. The ICRC will update diplomatic missions on the process in an August 23 meeting.

¶2. (C) As of August 22, the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) told U.S.-funded RONCO Australian technical advisor Craig Crosby that he and his Sri Lankan driver would be given passage from Jaffna to Trincomalee on a separate military ship departing this evening. As of the afternoon of August 22, Crosby had arrived at the High Security Zone (HSZ) in Jaffna and was waiting to board. A RONCO vehicle will escort him from the eastern port of Trincomalee to Colombo. One or two of three HALO Trust demining officers in Jaffna (UK-citizen Charles Kim Parsons and Kosovar-Albanian Blerim Tufa) wish to depart by a similar arrangement in the next several days by military ship or helicopter. The third HALO Trust expatriate (UK-citizen Stephen Pritchard) will remain in Jaffna to assist the Government Agent with the distribution of food supplies, but may accept passage out on a Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) ship in coming weeks.

¶3. (C) Background: Since fighting between GSL forces and the LTTE broke out on the Jaffna peninsula on August 11, the US Embassy has coordinated with other diplomatic missions to request evacuation assistance for expatriates from the area. We have been in direct contact with the four US-funded demining personnel who are based in Jaffna and the one US citizen, an employee of UNHCR, who wishes to remain in Jaffna. On August 17, SCA PDAS Steven Mann requested Army

Commander Major General Fonseka to provide military assistance in evacuating humanitarian mine action personnel from Jaffna. Embassy followed up with a diplomatic note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). DATT and poloff have spoken with Sri Lankan interlocutors daily to keep the process on track.

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